Rules of the Game
All About Movement (Part Three)
By Skip Williams

Now that we've covered move actions, let's take a look at how speed and skills can affect or are affected by movement.

Speeds and Skills

A creature has a speed rating for each kind of movement it can use. Most creatures have a single speed rating for land speed. Other possible speed ratings include burrow, climb, swim, and fly. The *Monster Manual* Glossary includes a wealth of detail on speeds.

A creature with only a land speed can climb or swim by making an appropriate skill check, but cannot charge, run, withdraw or take a 5-foot step while doing so. That's the chief difference between climbing or swimming with a climb speed and using the Climb or Swim skill.

Climb and Swim aren't the only skills that involve movement. In Part 3, we'll compare and contrast speed ratings and the skills that help landbound creatures mimic them. We'll also examine skills that function as part of movement.

Climb

A creature with a climb speed must make a Climb check to climb any wall or slope with a DC of more than 0, but it always can choose to take 10 (see Checks without Rolls, page 65 in the *Player's Handbook*), even if rushed, distracted, or endangered. It also gets a +8 racial bonus on all Climb checks. A successful check allows it to move its climb speed up down, or across the wall or slope as a move action. If it chooses an accelerated climb (see Climb, page 69 in the *Player's Handbook*), it moves at double the listed climb speed (or its land speed, whichever is less) and makes a single Climb check at a -5 penalty.

A creature with a climb speed retains its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (if any) while climbing. Most creatures with climb speeds don't have hands, though many use some sort of appendage to climb. Those with appendages must have them free to climb. A creature can cling to a wall with one appendage while it casts a spell or takes some other action that requires only one appendage. A limbless creature, such as an ooze, never has to worry about having any appendages free -- it can just climb.

If the creature takes damage while climbing, it makes a Climb check against the DC of the slope or wall to avoid falling. (It can take 10 on the check.)

Using the Climb Skill: A creature using the Climb skill to climb without a climb speed can take 10 on the check only when not rushed or threatened. It loses its Dexterity bonus (if any) while climbing, and it cannot take a 5-foot step or withdraw while climbing. A creature uses the Climb skill as a move action, and

climbing is movement. With a successful check, the climber moves at one quarter its land speed when climbing (or one half land speed if it makes an accelerated climb). On a failed check, the creature doesn't move at all (but still uses up a move action) if the check failed by 4 or less. The creature falls if the check fails by 5 or more. See the Climb skill description for other details.

All Climbers: Creatures cannot charge or run while climbing, even if they have Climb speeds.

Swim

A creature with a swim speed can move through water at its swim speed without making Swim checks. It has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check it makes to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. The creature always can choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if rushed, distracted, or endangered or when swimming in stormy water. The creature can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line. It also can charge, withdraw, or take a 5-foot step. Unlike creatures using the Swim skill, a creature with a swim speed does not have to make a Swim check each hour to avoid nonlethal damage.

Using the Swim Skill: A creature that doesn't have a swim speed must make a Swim check to move through the water when its feet don't touch the bottom. A successful check allows the creature to move through the water at a quarter of its current land speed as a move action or at half its current land speed as a full-round action. If the check fails by 4 or less, the creature makes no progress through the water. If the check fails by 5 or more, the creature goes underwater (if the creature is underwater already, there's no extra effect for failing a Swim check by 5 or more).

Swimmers that don't have swim speeds must make an extra Swim check (DC 20) for each hour they spend swimming. If the check fails, the swimmer takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage.

Creatures without swim speeds can charge (provided they can move at least 10 feet before attacking), but they cannot run, withdraw, or take a 5-foot step.

Balance

Although it's not terribly clear from the skill description, you can use the Balance skill two different ways.

First, you can make a Balance check to charge or run over a surface that is rough or uneven enough to trip you up, but not one that is so rugged as to make running or charging impossible. For example, you can make a Balance check (DC 10) to run or charge across an uneven flagstone floor or a hewn stone floor. You make one check. If you fail the check on an uneven flagstone floor, you can't move and your turn ends. If you fail the check on a hewn stone floor, you can still act, but you cannot run or charge this round.

Second, you can make a Balance check to move along a narrow or precarious surface, such as a ledge, beam, or tightrope. With a successful check, you can move at half your speed along the precarious surface as a move action. You can use a standard action to make a second move, but doing so requires a second Balance check. You can take a -5 penalty on your check and move at your full speed instead. You also can take -5 penalty on your check and charge across a precarious surface. If the distance you move in a charge is equal to or less than your speed, you make one Balance check. If the distance you charge is more than your speed (you can move up to twice your speed when charging), you must make two Balance checks.

A failure by 4 or less means you can't move for 1 round; you still use up a move action. A failure by 5 or more means you fall. If you're making two Balance checks and you succeed with the first one but fail the second, you stop moving and your turn ends (and you fall if you failed by 5 or more).

Hide

According to the Hide skill description, hiding isn't an action at all, except when you use the sniping option (see page 76 in the *Player's Handbook*), in which case hiding is a move action. For all practical purposes, however, you hide as a move action or as part of a move action. That is, if you're moving, you hide as part of your movement (something like drawing a weapon, see Part 2). If you don't move, it still takes you a move action to hide.

You take a -5 penalty on your Hide check if you move more than half your speed. In this case, you must track your speed by the action, not by the turn. If you move your speed as a move action, you take the penalty even if you don't move during the remainder of your turn. Likewise, speed is the amount of movement you expend, not the actual distance you move across the battlefield. If your movement is hampered, for example, and you move as far as you can possibly go as a move action (or as a full-round action), you take the -5 penalty.

Jump

Jumping is a part of movement. Simply add any distance you jump to any other movement you've spent during your turn (including the distance you've covered in the run-up to a running jump). The distance you cover in a jump is the horizontal distance for a long jump and the vertical distance in a high jump (but always at least 10 feet for a high jump).

Disregard the vertical portion of a long jump (one quarter the jump's horizontal distance). If you make a high jump and drop back to the ground, don't count the distance you've dropped.

Jumping Over an Obstacle: If you high jump over an obstacle, you spend whatever movement you need to enter the square on the other side, plus the movement cost for the high jump. If you don't have enough movement available, you can't make the jump, but you can use the minimum movement rule (see Part 2) to make the jump as a full-round action. Also see the section on jumping farther than your speed allows.

Hopping Up: You can use a Jump check to leap up on top of an obstacle that is no more than waist high (that is about half your height) with a DC 10 Jump check at a cost of 10 feet of movement. If the obstacle has enough space on top to let you stand on it, you wind up on top of obstacle, otherwise, you just hop over it.

If you fail the Jump check to jump up, you spend 10 feet of movement and wind up on your feet in the square where you tried the hop.

Jumping Farther than Your Speed Allows: If you have a high Strength score or a lot of ranks in the Jump skill (or both) it's quite possible that you can get a Jump check result that carries you through more distance than your speed allows, especially if you move some distance before jumping. When that happens, you end your turn in the air. During your next turn, you must finish the jump before you do anything else. If your speed still won't allow you to finish the jump, just repeat the process until you

complete the jump.

Move Silently

Moving silently isn't an action. You move silently as part of your movement. As with the Hide skill, you take a -5 penalty on your Move Silently check if you move more than half your speed (see the notes under the Hide skill).

Ride

Though your steed actually does the moving, much of what you do with the Ride skill counts as move action or as movement (or both) for you.

Since your mount takes you along with it when it moves, a move for your mount also counts as a move for you (you're not propelling yourself, but you still spend time moving). So, for example, if you and your mount move, neither you nor your mount can take a 5-foot step during the same turn.

In many cases, you can do something else while your mount does the moving, such as make ranged attacks, reload a crossbow, cast a spell, or any number of other things that normally would be actions for you. You can use the full attack action to make ranged attacks when your mount takes a move action, and there's no penalty for doing so if your mount does not make a double move. If your mount runs or makes a double move, you suffer a penalty on your ranged attacks, as noted on page 157 in the *Player's Handbook* (the Mounted Archery feat can reduce those penalties). If your mount moves as a full-round action (as it might if it uses the rule for minimum movement), your ranged attacks are penalized as though the mount took a double move. There's no penalty on your melee attacks for your mount's movement, but if you mount moves before you attack in a turn, you cannot us the full attack action (see page 157 in the *Player's Handbook).*

Here's an overview of tasks you perform with the Ride skill:

Guide with Knees: Although the skill description doesn't specifically say so, this is not an action at all. You make the check at the beginning of your turn. If you succeed, you don't have to use your hands to control your mount until the beginning of your next turn, when you have to repeat the check to continue guiding your mount with your knees.

Stay in Saddle: This usage does not take an action.

Fight with Warhorse: This usage is a free action.

Cover: This usage does not take an action.

Soft Fall: This usage does not take an action.

Leap: This usage does not take an action, but it is part of the mount's movement.

Spur Mount: This is a move action for you, which you take while your mount moves and carries you along.

Control Mount in Battle: This also is a move action for you, which you take while your mount moves and carries you along. If you fail to control a mount that is not trained for war during a battle, the rules say your turn is over. There is, however, no reason why you can't simply fall off your mount to keep it from galloping away with you. Deliberately falling off your mount is a free action for you. If you decide to fall off, you can make a Ride check to soften the fall (which doesn't take an action).

Fast Mount or Dismount: This is a free action for you and it does not count as movement for you.

Tumble

Tumbling is part of movement, so a Tumble check is part of a move action. Any distance you spend tumbling counts against your movement for the turn. You tumble at half speed, as if each square you tumble through costs you 10 feet of movement (15 if you tumble on a diagonal). If you accept a -10 penalty on your check, you tumble at normal speed. You cannot tumble at all if your encumbrance (from armor or load) reduces your speed.

Tumbling to Hop Up: Since tumbling involves acrobatic maneuvers such as flips, rolls, and cartwheels, there's no good reason why you couldn't make a Tumble check to roll onto or over a waist-high obstacle. Normally, you'd make a Jump check (DC 10) to do that, but you can accomplish the same thing with a Tumble check (DC 15). You still expend 10 feet of movement to perform the hop and you land on your feet in front of the obstacle if you fail.

Tumbling While Crawling: Though the rules don't say so, there's no reason you can't can tumble 5 feet as a move action when prone. The check DC is 20.

What's Next?

Next week, take a look at flight and other speeds that can affect movement.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and has been the Sage of **Dragon** *Magazine* since 1986. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (his borscht gets rave reviews).

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